

[1]

An Answer to the Popes Letter

Written to the King of *France*, wherein he insinuates that Barbarous Doctrine, *That Temporal Dominion is founded upon Religion*: With a Refutation also of the Popes Supremacy.

May it please Your Holiness,

VE of the Reformed Church do in all the Humility that becomes us, return our Answer to your Letter to the King of *France*, for it is that which requires our Answer, and not his.

Your Holiness is pleased with all Expressions of Zeal to Lift your high Spiritualities under the prosperous Banner of that King, with no less confidence of his future progress, than gratulation of his past proceedings. Now since we are liable to his Irresistible Power, and must be sure to fly before his Omnipotent Hostility, why should Your Holiness seek to prevent his victorious Hand, by the hazardous, infamous, and fallible Attempts of Private Murther, Firing, &c. And since you are pleased to hold the Profession of the Art of Religion and War in a complication, how could these things happen to us under that Conjunction? For though the harsh Constitution of the Church may give them Authority, yet then methinks the Gentleness of Martial Discipline might a little mitigate the rigour of Religion, for they are evermore forbidden by the true Principles of War.

But how unreasonably then doth Your Holiness charge our Government with Cruelty? What is it onely because our King will not suffer himself to be murder'd by his own Subjects? If they are any way so much yours, as you seem to own them by your Vindication, why did you not take them to you from amongst the Hereticks? But if they will live here in wealth and prosperity, under the influence of His Majesty's Protection; if then they will remove that Protection, they are naturally as well as legally left to destruction. Would Your Holiness as you are a Temporal Prince take such a Reflection so much as for common sence?

But it seems, if we will not suffer slaughter and dissolution by Treachery, the penalty is but to receive it by open War; and we will chuse the later because it is furthest off. And what need we fear that, seeing Men, Women, and Children are already in the condition of common Souldiers, subject to be put to death for not being killed?

Your Holiness cannot think we will believe, that he was offensive onely to Heretics by the name of Heretics, for then he had not taken away those Towns from his Brother of *Spain*, which he would no doubt have done if they had been his Father's, as you call your self. But now in requital of Your Holiness's Reception into this Military Renown, you are pleased to adopt that King into your Theological Capacity, by imputing unto him a Celestial Knowledge of that which is not to be found in Divinity nor Reason, namely, That Kingdoms are founded upon the truth of the Orthodox Faith.

Now the Position is a *Paralogism*, and not altogether false *in terminis*; for though Kingdoms be founded otherwise, yet in some sence Christian Kingdoms may be said to be so founded, and you do not say, Kingdoms in general are not otherwise founded. But if that had been the meaning, you had said nothing at all; therefore I take your intent to be, That the Truth of the Orthodox Faith hath Right of Dominion, or right and just Dominions are founded upon the Orthodox Faith.

A

This

This therefore, besides that there is not one word of Scripture for it, our Saviour *totidem verbis* disclaims, *My kingdom is not of this world*, therefore my Servants do not fight. Besides that he hath done the same by notorious inference; for since Peace of all things was his Legacy, (my Peace, not my Love, my Justice, my Mercy, my Patience, &c. but *My peace I give unto you*;) either this was to the Apostles onely, or to the Church in general. If the first, then Your Holiness is punctually forbidden to take or joyn your self to the Sword in any manner, at least Offensive: If the later, (which I rather think to be intended) then a King being a Member of that Church, though he must fight to defend his own, and may impugn a profest Enemy, he must not violently invade the Dominions of others that live quietly by him; for so you will absolve a Christian King from all Christian Duty, not onely of Peace but Justice, which is most properly exercised in respect of other Princes, for that the unequal Conversation of a King with his own People is not so capable of the Evidences of Religious Vertues.

But lest the *Index Expurgatorius* should have discharged you of this Text, we will endeavour to prove it by Reason.

If Kingdoms are of right onely founded on the Truth of the Orthodox Faith; then what shall we say of all those Heathen Dominions, that during the History of the Bible, and ever since, have enjoyed long and flourishing Durations, under the preservation of excellent Politick Laws, and Principles of Humanity and Society, to which Dominions not onely their own Subjects, but the Orthodox People of God (if happening under them) were required to yield their Obedience, (*salvâ religione*.)

Shall we part the World, the Flesh, and the Devil? Or shall we deny to give each its due? Shall they who expect an everlasting Kingdom, (and that for the sake of doing Justice) not onely be guilty of, but profess such Emphatical Iniquity, as to snatch away from the poor Reprobate World, the contemptible Boon of a Momentary Dominion? It was a far milder injury than this in *Nathan's* Parable, that awakened the indignation of Justice in King *David* to the severest Sentence.

Man by the name of Man had Dominion given him over the Earth, and the Furniture thereof; and after he fell, that is, after he ceased to be Orthodox, retained yet still by the name of Man the Right of Dominion. Now this natural Dominion must needs import that Politick Dominion about which we contend, because without that it is impossible to enjoy this, as every mans Experience and Observation must needs suggest.

But if Dominion be its right, then till that is obtained Fighting for it is its right. Now, is this right of Fighting understood as an evil or a good to those of the Orthodox Faith? I suppose it is not intended by Your Holiness as an evil; for though the Church must bear, she is not to prepare her Cross. If then it be understood as a good, then shew me the man (except the ambitious Prince and the mercenary Commander) that doth not esteem it the most unhappy life that is spent in War. War! it is one of God's great Judgments, equivalent to Plague and Famine; that which all mankind by natural instinct do shun and dread. And is this the perpetual lot of the Elect by the name of a Right? For this War, by the nature of the Position, must never have an end till the whole World be conquered, for the same reason that it must begin. But supposing the whole World to be conquered, then still as to the generality of men, after that dear-bought Universality, who will be the better? Man will have but the whole World, and so he hath now.

But again if this be so, then since all the Persuasions do hold themselves Orthodox; (for no man will profess a Religion, and say it is false.) It is very likely
this

this Principle will be one Ingredient of all their Religions, and so all parts of the Universe, by a certain *Idiosyncrasis* of fighting for their own, will be moving War together; and so we shall affect the World with a universal principle of Contention, Slaughter, and Destruction, and all the miserable Concomitants of War; and that not as an accident of its depravation, not as the issue of its corruption, but as matter and part of the original rectitude of its constitution, because all this is to be *quatenus* Truth and Orthodox Faith. And as it is in the World at large, so will it be with the Factions in every particular Kingdom: Every one as he thinketh himself Orthodox, will also think himself entitled to Dominion and Property over all the rest. Now for that I know Your Holiness maketh no question but the Truth of the Orthodox Faith is in the Church of *Rome*, and consequently the Right of Dominion; when you shall have conquered all the World, I pray you which of all the 300 Factions among you shall have it, since but one can be the Orthodox? and Your Holiness can tell if you are infallible.

As for the putting Saints out of the Temple, if your Authority be not good, (as I shall shew presently) there are no such Saints; then as to the condemning the Forefathers, if you mean those we commonly call the Fathers, we deny it: We approve every word of every one, but all that say as you say we deny to be Fathers. But the question of the Fathers is not rightly taken by some, for they spake nothing of any point as if it were in controversy, for it was not then. If you mean the Popes, then to their and your Authority we say thus:

1. The whole Difference betwixt you and us depends upon the Authority of the Pope, (at least that is the grand Controversie.) 2. That Authority depends upon his Succession to *S. Peter*. 3. The Virtue of that Succession depends upon three things in conjunction, *viz.* *S. Peter's* being Universal Bishop, his sitting at *Rome* in that capacity, and his Authority for both; (for if he sate at *Rome*, and were not Universal, you are not Universal; if he were Universal, and sate not at *Rome*, you are not his Successor; if he had no Authority, neither have you.) 4. This Authority of the Pope is Matter of Faith, or equivalent to it; (for you say, To be out of the Church is damnable, and to deny the Popes Authority is to be out of the Church.) 5. This great Matter of Faith is built upon these three things, two of which are Matter of Fact, and the other Interpretation of Scripture. 6. That upon which Matter of Faith depends, ought to be as certain as the Faith ought to be steadfast: then if those three things are so certain, shew me the Evidence, which I require to be as plain as that whereby we know Christ was the Messias; because it is to support a point of Faith, the want of which you make as dangerous as the want of that. And now in this case Your Holiness is prevented of the use of your *Archimedes's* Engine, (having no where to stand while you use it) *viz.* The Pope saith so, therefore it is true. For the question is, not whether the Pope say so, but whether it be true because the Pope saith so. So that this must be previously proved to ground his Credit upon. Do not mistake the *Elenchus*, the Dispute is not of *S. Peter's* being Universal Bishop, or sitting at *Rome*, nor of his Authority so to do, but of such a Certainty of these things as Faith requires. We are not sure that *S. Peter* was not so, and did not so, and had not so; but we are sure that we cannot be sure he was so, and did so, and had so: and so long no man can be required to ascribe this Authority to the Pope. Take by the way but *Bellarmino's* first Argument to prove that he was at *Rome* Bishop or no Bishop: *S. Peter* (saith he) in his Epistle writeth thus, *The Church at Babylon salute you*; which *Babylon* is figuratively *Rome*: A proper basis to build Faith upon; I am confident that he himself did not take either this or any other he useth to be so.

Then as to the Interpretation, it is positively impossible that God could deal so unreasonably and unmercifully, as to leave that Uncertain, upon the Certainty whereof the Temporal and Eternal Peace of his Church depends, if all the true Religion rest upon this question, namely, Whether the Pope be what he pretends to be, or not? Is it possible that the Scripture, which came on purpose to teach us Religion, should let us understand nothing of it, but what we can pick out, as if we were reading a Riddle, or interpreting a Dream or an Oracle; nay, and must pick out that which by no rule or measure of Interpretation can be found out? Is God such an *Egyptian Task-master*?

Thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build my Church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against her. Whatsoever thou bindest in Earth shall be bound in Heaven. Feed my sheep.

Now as we tender our being in the Church, and consequently our Salvation, we must find in these words all these Institutions, (and that as certain and conspicuous as *Thou shalt do no murder.*) 1. That S. Peter was thereby made the greatest of the Apostles. 2. That being so, he was Bishop of the World. 3. That being so, where ever he sat, that place should retain that Holiness, that who so ever succeeded in that Seat should be Universal Bishop. 4. That that Universal Bishop hath an Infallible Faculty and Authority in interpreting Scripture, and dictating the Doctrines of the Church. 5. That he hath power over Kings; and several other things. Now no man can say, that these things do naturally flow from these, and then though they could (which they cannot) by dint of Syllogism, involved Reasonings, and Concatenations of Inferences be deduc'd; yet then they would not seem to be the things that every one is required to believe, because every one then is not capable of them.

Perhaps you will object, Every one is bound to believe the matters in the *Athanasian Creed*, yet those are not found in Scripture but by Inferences, which every one is not able to make, neither doth every one understand it.

The Case is not the same, for we believe there is a God before we come to the *Athanasian Creed*, (and do also naturally suppose great things in that God) and then from that learn the manner and nature of his Being, which then we have no reason to disbelieve, unless we know any thing more likely to be true, or any thing that were likely to make that false; and no man is bound to believe any more of this than he understands. But that there is a God in general every one is bound to believe; but now in this case we do not first believe a Pope, and then come to this dark Analogy, to learn the Nature of his Office. But we come to this, to learn that there is such a thing as a Pope, (it being all the way that he is to be proved,) which therefore since you make so necessary, ought to be depending upon a common Testimony. To conclude then, he that cannot find Evidence for the Matters of Fact aforesaid, and a certain Rule for this Interpretation, must not be a Papist; and he that can, deserves to be a Pope.

Your Holiness's

As far as is Lawful,

ANGLICUS.